

GRAPHIC CHATTING WITH ORGANIZATIONAL AVATARS
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ABSTRACT

5 A new class of avatars ("organizational avatars") created in accordance with the present invention holds a value or a significance independent from their use in a virtual environment, unlike the generic avatars whose value is limited to their being used in a chatroom. For example, an organizational avatar may be in the image of a trademark (which may be copyrighted), such as Mickey Mouse, Colonel Sanders, or Pikachu (a Pokemon character). The organizational avatars may represent certain organizations, typically the organizations that own trademark and/or copyright rights to the images used to form the avatars in virtual environments. Therefore, users of virtual environments can interface various companies by interacting with organizational avatars. Alternatively, organizational avatars may represent users independent of the organization, but under a contract with the organization that owns the image the avatars depict. By using organizational avatars, companies of all sizes can increase their interactivity with customers, advertise cost effectively, and promote a positive image for their products. Tiles are used to provide faster download of a chatroom's background. Tiles also allow rapid generation of a chatroom's background, eliminating the need to use a graphics editor.

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